

[M. C. Manuel]

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Range-lore

Annie McAulay

Maverick, Texas.

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RANGE-LORE

M. C. Manuel, son of S. H. Manuel, was born in San Jacinto County, Texas, December 21, 1882. He moved with his parents to Runnels County, when only a few months of age, later they moved to Ben Ficklin, Ton Green County, where Mr. Manuel lived until grown or, until he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was honorably discharged at the close of the Spanish American War. He has punched cattle in three different states, Texas, Oklahoma and California.

"I began riding when I was quite young," says M. C. Manuel, "although I didn't work cattle much until I was nearly 2 grown. My father was a farmer who kept a small herd of cattle but was not called a rancher. The first job I had was in Tom Green County when I was about sixteen years old. All I had to do was round up steers and feed 'em or help with the branding or fence building a little. I worked a little while and then joined the army. I was in training about a year when to my disappointment the war closed.

"I came home after leaving the army, and worked on a ranch a few miles from father's, but wasn't satisfied and left right away for El Paso. I got a job on the J. S. Notion Ranch near El Paso, where I worked for a number of years. I had a number of experiences while working on this ranch but only one that's worth mentioning, I guess. I helped to drive 1,800

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head of cattle from El Paso to Ingle, New Mexico. At night we'd bed the cattle down and then guard and watch them in shifts, so as to give everybody a chance to get a little shut-eye. Well, I was on the first shift one night. We were camped at a pretty hilly place in New Mexico. We had some mean and restless leaders in that bunch. Some feller struck a match which seemed to frighten some of them and got them started. Well, I'll be darned if the whole business wasn't up and moving before we could stop 'em. We worked all night trying to keep 3 them together. We let them get out on a hill though, and it was good-bye dogies. We had a nice time trying to round 'em up next morning, and how the boss did cuss. But I'll tell you that was some hard riding we did.

"I went from that El Paso ranch to Three Rivers, New Mexico to work. I only had one dollar in my pocket. I went to see a bull fight before I left El Paso and I bet about all the money I had on the wrong bull. One of my feet, or rather both of them were frozen, but I nearly lost one of them. I was working on The Bar X Ranch in New Mexico at the time. Me and another feller got caught out in a snowstorm while bringing in a few head of cattle from another ranch about thirty miles away. We had to camp for three days and wait for it to let up. We got pretty weak and so did the cows. And my feet froze. It was a long time before I could walk on one of them.

"Arizona Jack was about the best bronc rider I ever saw. He was sure good and a clean rider, too. He was the craziest guy I ever saw about riding mean ones. The tougher they were the better he liked it. I saw him ride a fast and high pitcher once. He pitched Arizona Jack into a tree, or at least he caught a limb and saved himself.

"Yes, we had a heap of fun with the greener or 4 tenderfoot. We called 'em arbuckles. Of course the hands did treat 'em a little rough but if they couldn't stick it out, they wasn't much good on a ranch anyhow.

"I went to California in 1906, and worked for the CL & M Cattle Company. The cattle men in that country dreaded the overflows from the Colorado River, caused by the melting of

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snow in the mountains and spring rains. Sometimes when the cattle were caught in those overflows we'd have to go out in boats and pull 'em out. It was certainly mean work. It was very brushy too. We always carried our branding ring with us, and if we ran across an unbranded calf we'd brand him on the spot.

"After I got tired of ranch life I opened up a Transfer Company of my own in Calexico, California, and ran it for fifteen years. I came back to Runnels County a short time ago and find I still like it.

"People are about the same on ranches and other places, everywhere you go. Most of 'em are good fellers when you get to know 'em. And these old cowpunchers would do anything for a man in a tight. I ought to know."

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

M. C. Manuel, Maverick, Texas, interviewed, January 19, 1938.